September/October, 1985

Lasca Leaves

Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TUTORS STUDENT ON "REAL WORLD"

THE 1985 INTERNS in the Horticultural Intern Program at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum are mostly local students with only three of the 14 from outside California.

"I love it here, but today it's too hot," Loretta Parks of Springfield, Mo., said as she wiped sweat from her brow after helping plant a new palm tree in the Prehistoric and Jungle Garden during the 110 degree heat of early July. The proud possessor of a recent BS in horticulture from Southwest Missouri State University, she reveled in finally being able to work in the field. "In school back in Missouri, we didn't get the opportunity to apply any of the classroom techniques. Now we do, which is very interesting," she said.

Mike Mayer, down from Humboldt State where he is majoring in botany, concurred. "Horticulture isn't emphasized in my studies so this is a great experience, being able to work in a so-called 'living museum'," he enthused.

When asked what specific job she enjoyed most, Fresno State student Suzette Girouard replied, "I like mapping with herbarium curator, Suzanne Granger. Sometimes, it gets frustrating when you can't find a certain plant that's supposed to be there. But, on the other hand, it's a great feeling when you do find what you're looking for."

Several of the interns mentioned that the job fit their expectations exactly. However, some of them like Rosana Costello of Humboldt said that so far it has turned out to be hard work. She had realized that there would be a lot of strenuous projects but a few exceeded her expectations. Nevertheless, she said that she was "happy to be here."

Brigham Young University student Ginger Smith changed majors twice before she recently opted for horticulture. "I'm not too far into my major, so I'm really learning a lot on this job. I'm actually here to determine if this is really what I want to do. So far, I really think I've found my career," she said.

Kathleen Farnan, taking the summer off from her studies at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, is someone who really gets into her work. "I seem to

LuAnn Munns

The interns pitch in as they help plant one of several large trees north of the Tropical Greenhouse during their exposure to practical horticulture at the Arboretum.

be the one who always acquires the most dirt. Dirt and blisters, that's me," she said with a wry grin. "However, it's more worthwhile because it will help me to see what it's like in the real world," she added.

Finding out about the "real world" appeared to be the top priority for everyone in this group of interns. Other students participating in the internship program funded by the California Arboretum Foundation this year are: Jim Hammontree, Cal Poly, Pomona; Sam Williamson, Harvard Graduate School; Tanja Gillespie, Mt. SAC; Julie Walters, Cal Poly, Pomona; Barbara Leach, University of Wisconsin at Stephens Point; Erin Black, Cal Poly, Pomona; Tom Brownlee, Cerritos Community College; and Randy Hammer, Cal Poly, Pomona.

LuAnn Munns

Nancy Wilson sings for an audience of more than 2,000 music fans July 14 during an "Evening of Music and Picnic in the Gardens" sponsored by the California Arboretum Foundation.

LUCKY'S LADIES PROMENADE FOR FOUNDATION MEMBERS

The 400 members of the California Foundation who gathered for the annual meeting June 5 were treated to a rare display of period costumes from the historical clothing collection of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. Historian Sandy Snider chose each beautiful dress for "A Baldwin Family Fashion Show" to illustrate a different phase in the lives of the women of the Santa Anita Ranch. Beginning with a bell-skirted white silk that young Jennie Dexter might have worn, the parade continued in time through the Gay Nineties and the days of WW I, ending with slinky dresses that Lucky Baldwin's daughter Anita might have worn during the 1930s.

During the business meeting that followed, three members were added to the Board of Trustees: Mrs. Hanna Bradley, Suzanne (Mrs. Richard) Miller and Gwen (Mrs. Guilford) Babcock. The Board was later brought to full strength with the addition of Trustee L. W. Lane Jr.

James Johnson

Arboretum staff and friends await their turn to promenade in the "Baldwin Family Fashion Show."

AGAPANTHUS NAMED IN TRIBUTE TO PROMINENT LOCAL GARDENER

THE ARBORETUM's newest introduction, a robust, royal blue agapanthus, has been named 'Ellamae' as a tribute to a staunch friend of the garden who has gained national prominence in gardening circles. Mrs. John N. Fehrer has been affiliated with the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum for more than 20 years and has served on the board of trustees of the California Arboretum Foundation.

When it was learned from the Arcadia district that Mrs. Fehrer had been elected president of the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc., a search was initiated for an appropriate symbol to celebrate her achievement. Fortunately, an agapanthus cultivar that had been hybridized by the Arboretum over 10 years ago had just been evaluated and judged ready for introduction.

Agapanthus 'Ellamae' is an outstanding selection notable for its vigor and the large heads of deep blue flowers on scapes rising high above the broad, evergreen leaves.

LuAnn Munns

Mrs. John N. Fehrer admires Agapanthus *'Ellamae,' a new Arboretum introduction named in her honor.*

Presentation of a number of awards highlighted the annual end-of-season Las Voluntarias y Los Ayudantes meeting June 10. Members who have been active volunteers for 15 or more years received sterling silver and enamel pins designed by CAF Benefactor Chris Valencia. Recipients of the 15 year pins are, from left (front row) Anne Slavik, Aileen Martin and Phyllis Soza. In the back row are Jean O'Toole, Mary Atkinson, Mary McBroom, Grace Robinson, Marilyn Bochte and Win Henke. Not present are Margaret Dean, Louise Jackson, Ruth Mary Larson, Betty Wall and Marion Webb.

HUCK FINN DAY OPENS SUMMER WITH FISHING, FOOD AND FUN

WILY CATFISH made the fishing derby a real contest for the 1,000 young anglers at Huck Finn Day on June 29. Even *Los Angeles Times* columnist Jack Smith, honorary kid for the day, waited about 30 minutes from the time he threw out the official first hook until he landed his catch. But the very elusiveness of the quarry added to the fun; every fish pulled out of Lasca Lagoon drew a murmur of admiration from the crowd, and the six trophy-sized catfish won fleeting fame as well as cash prizes for their captors.

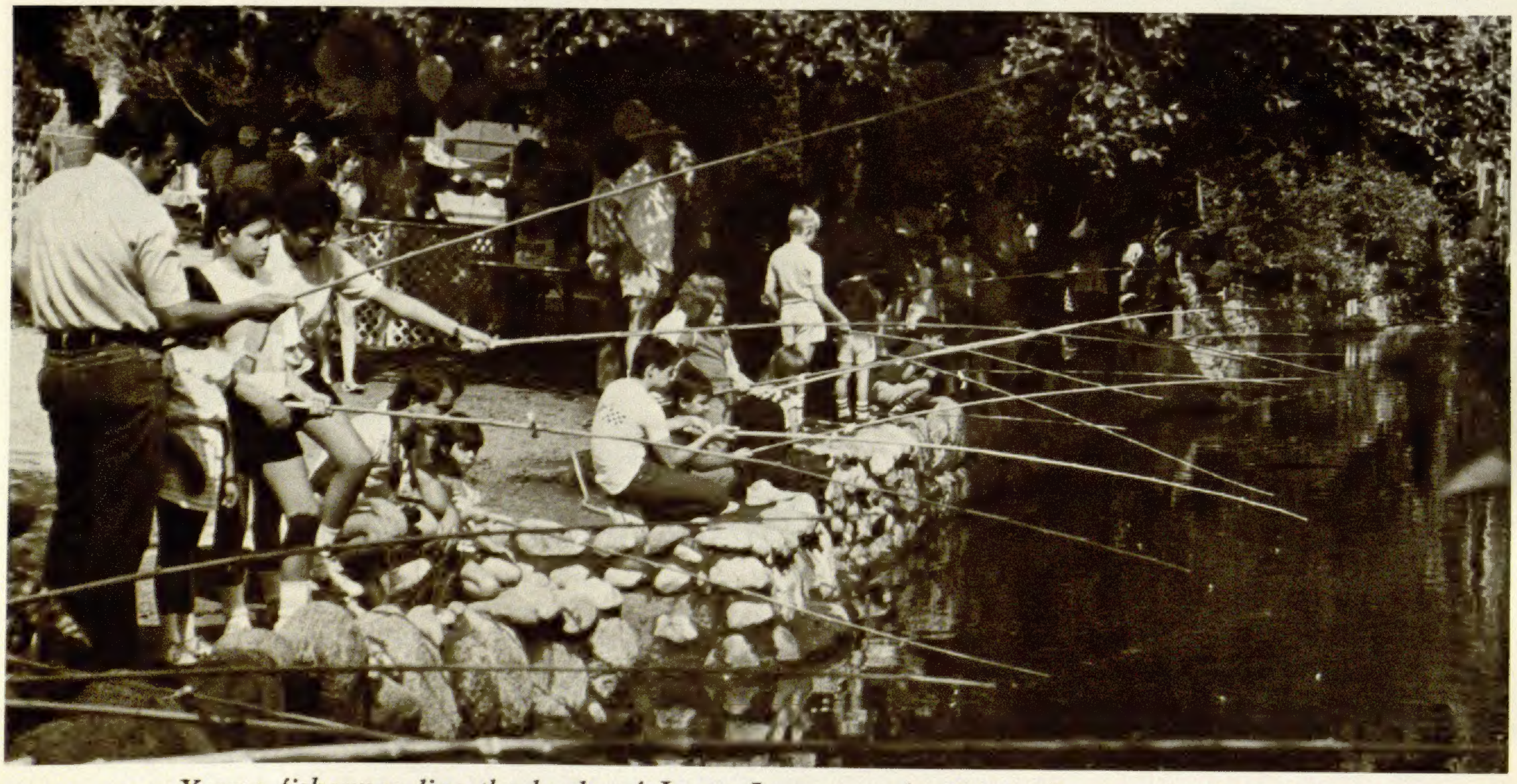
Everyone seemed to be having so much fun that it was hard to tell the youngsters from the grownups. Mime Judi Garrett trailed a bunch of mini-mimes in her wake, leaving little eddies of laughter and magic in the crowd. Pop the Clown was there, making kids' eyes sparkle with the armloads of balloon animals and hearts he fashioned for small fans. Completing the Mississippi River mood that hovered around the lake shore was the live Dixieland music from the California Banjoliers.

Alice Thomas, the person responsible for the first Huck Finn Day at the Arboretum, was pleased that almost 4,000 visitors (twice the average Saturday attendance) came to celebrate the beginning of summer fun. But she quickly turned the attention back to the Las Voluntarias y Los Ayudantes who made the day a success.

"The day was planned as something for the children, and it seemed to go over so well with them," she said. "But the most exciting part was the marvelous turnout of volunteers. I was so delighted to see them having such a good time too."

LuAnn Munns

Columnist Jack Smith shows his young fans the fighting catfish he caught in his role as honorary kid during Huck Finn Day at the Arboretum.



LuAnn Munns

Young fishermen line the banks of Lasca Lagoon, trying to catch a trophy-sized fish.

(LASCA continues after page 32)

Plant Portraits

Kapok Relatives at the Arboretum

By Edward Murray

The bombax family (Bombacaceae) contains many beautiful, curious, and economically important members from tropical and subtropical parts of the world. They include the baobab trees, balsa wood, the durian fruit, and our native flannel bush. The kapok tree *(Ceiba pentandra)* is grown as an ornamental in southern Florida. In tropical areas the abundant cottony floss surrounding each seed is harvested for stuffing mattresses and life preservers. In our mild Southern California climate, it has been possible to cultivate several kapok relatives at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum.

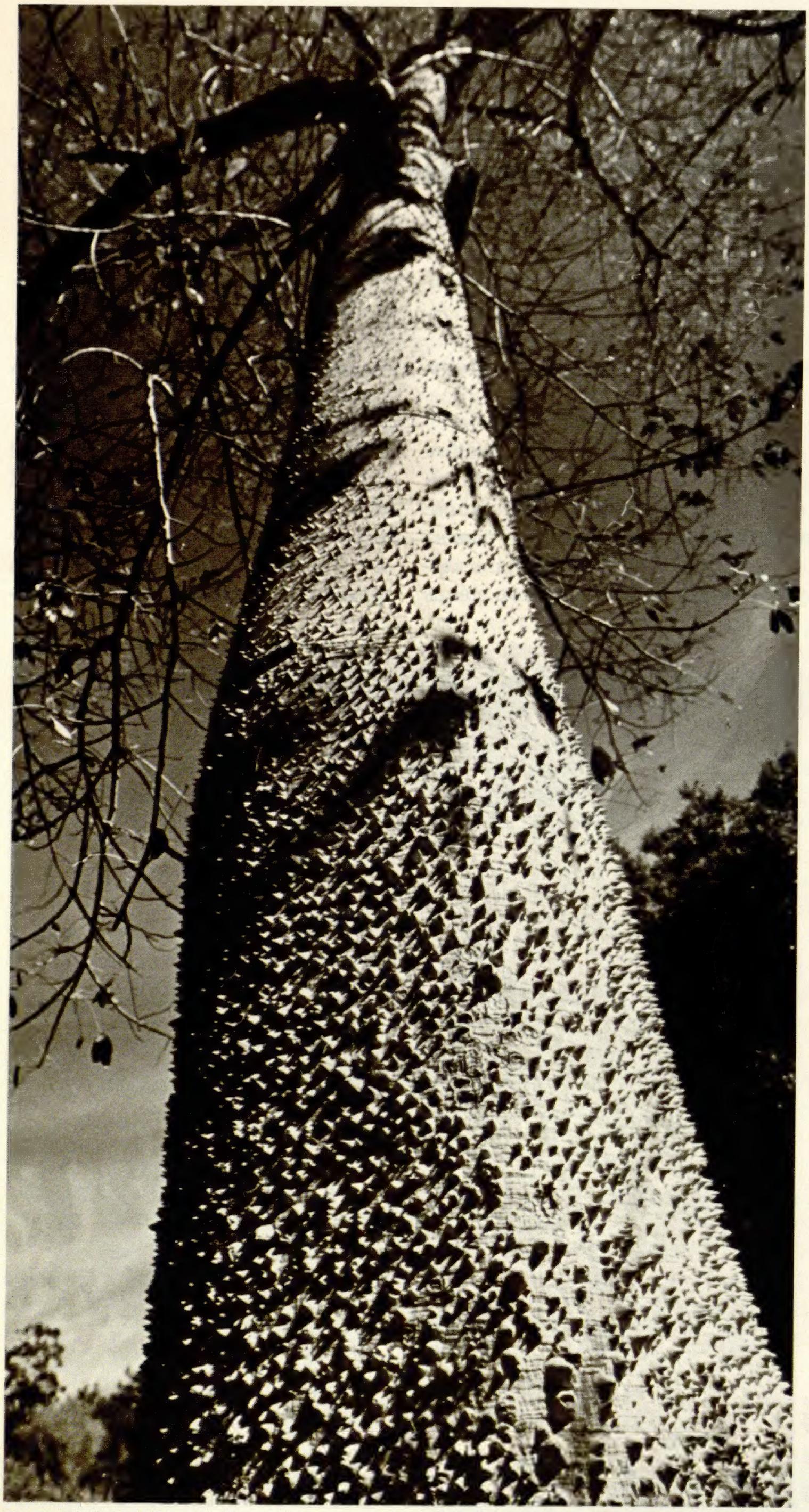
A curious ornamental from Mexico and Guatemala is the Mexican hand flower, *(Chiranthodendron pentadactylon)* "hand flower tree with five fingers." Although a shy bloomer in our area, the flowers are worth searching for. Each takes the form of a miniature red hand with five fingers out of a fuzzy, cup-like base. From Aztec times to present, this flower has been sold in Mexican markets as a heart tonic.

The red silk cotton tree *(Bombax ceiba)* from tropical Asia has performed surprisingly well at the Arboretum. Until last fall when it was downed by a Santa Ana wind storm, a specimen about 25 feet high on Tallac Knoll had produced many flowers on stout leafless branches each spring. These flowers were outstanding: large, red, and waxy. Many younger plants are maturing at other spots on the grounds, and we can eventually expect to see more of these wonderful blooms in years to come.

Floss-silk is the common name applied to the South American genus *Chorisia.* The two species cultivated at the Arboretum are vigorous and very worthwhile for Southern California providing a spectacular show of autumn and winter blooms. Both species are evergreen or briefly de-

William Aplin

Fluff-filled seed pods still cling to the branches of Chorisia insignis *when the creamy white flowers emerge in the fall.*



William Aplin

The spiky, bottle-shaped trunk of the pink floss-silk tree (Chorisia speciosa) *may reach a height of 60 feet.*

ciduous with leaves divided into leaflets like the fingers on a hand.

White floss-silk tree *(Chorisia insignis)* is native to Peru. The slender branched tree may ultimately reach 50 feet. In order to conserve water for use during periods of drought the dull greenish trunk is bulbous or bottle-shaped. To ward off animals that would devour the flowers and/or fruit, the trunk is armed with numerous stout spines. The creamy-white flowers with yellowish centers are very attractive against the blue skies of winter but present a potential litter problem over pavement. The large, avocado-shaped fruit also makes for messy removal problems in the lawn. The brittle limbs may also break during a storm. But all in all the white floss-silk tree flowers during the short days of the year when one cherishes anything in blossom.

Pink floss-silk tree *(Chorisia speciosa)* is native to Brazil and Argentina. It may reach 50 feet after many years of growth. The trunk is similarly dull-greenish, more or less bulbous to conserve water and armed heavily or lightly with stout spines. The flowers are 3 to 5 inches in diameter; the petals are usually pubescent (softly hairy) and variously colored from white or yellow to red or violet and usually streaked or shaded creamy towards the center of the blossoms. The seed capsules are up to 8 inches long and shaped somewhat like a very slender avocado. In the spring these capsules burst open to display the white, cottony masses of kapok-like material which envelops the wrinkled black pea-sized seeds. These germinate quite readily and are an actual nuisance at the Arboretum in that many unwanted seedlings result as the filmy kapok transports the seeds many feet away from the mother tree. Although the tree has brittle branches and offers a litter problem due to its flowers and fruits, it grows rapidly at the Arboretum and should be fast-growing in the home garden. Autumn and win-

ter-flowering trees are at a premium and pink floss-silk tree is one of the most unusual and one of the most beautiful trees at this season. The tree is certainly a conversation piece and attracts more than its share of visitor attention from September through February.

The Arboretum has introduced several cultivars through the years. Cultivar 'Arcadia' has deep pink flowers from November through February. It was introduced by the Arboretum in 1978 and promptly offered to the City of Arcadia for street planting as well as to the members of the California Arboretum Foundation. 'Lasca Beauty' was introduced by the Arboretum in 1976. It has 5-inch deep rose-pink flowers in mid-autumn. In 1974 'Los Angeles Beautiful' was introduced by the Arboretum for its unusually beautiful rose-pink flowers which are produced more abundantly and later into winter (December through February). 'September Splendour' is a 1976 Arboretum introduction which is the earliest to flower. 'Majestic Beauty' has rich pink flowers in the autumn and is available through your local nurseryman. These cultivars are easily cleft grafted and should become more readily available in the nursery trade in the years to come.

Visitors to the Arboretum can readily find the large, swollen greenish trunks with their stout spines in several locations on the grounds: on Tallac Knoll, near the old Education Building, and west of Ayres Hall near the site of the annual Baldwin Bonanza, and in the main entrance lawn where young specimens of the named varieties may be found. The Mexican hand flower is growing on the east side of the upper lake.

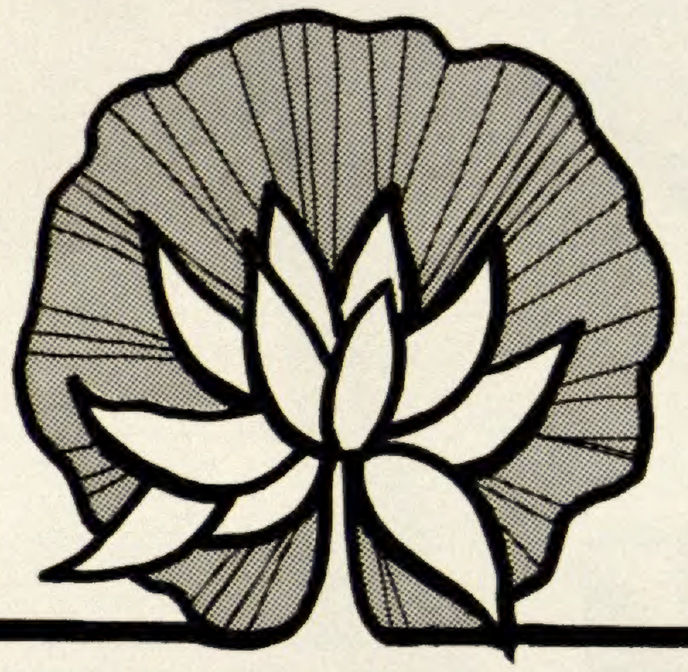
Dr. Murray, who obtained his PhD at Pennsylvania State University, is a staff biologist at the Arboretum.

James Bauml

Since the time of the Aztecs, people have been intrigued by the hand-like stamens of Chiranthodendron pentadactylon.

William Aplin

Brown lines mark the deep pink flowers of Chorisia speciosa *'Arcadia,' a tree introduced by the Arboretum in 1978.*



LOS ANGELES GARDEN SHOW

water in the garden

OCTOBER 18-27 at the ARBORETUM

GALA PREVIEW NIGHT FOR FOUNDATION MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER
1985

LOS ANGELES STATE AND COUNTY ARBORETUM, Arcadia

SEPT. 7, 8 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Ivy Show
American Ivy Society, California Chpt.
SEPT. 22 — 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Turtle and Tortoise Show
California Turtle and Tortoise Club, Foothill Chapter
SEPT. 28, 29 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Bonsai Show
Akebono Bonsai Society
OCT. 17 through 27 — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
LOS ANGELES GARDEN SHOW
California Arboretum Foundation
NOV. 2, 3 — Saturday, 1 to 4:30 p.m.
Sunday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Rose Show
San Gabriel Valley Rose and Horticultural Society
NOV. 16, 17 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Bonsai Show
Santa Anita Bonsai Society
All events sponsored by the California Arboretum Foundation

DESCANSO GARDENS, La Canada

SEPT. 22 — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Concours Descanso
Horseless Carriage Club of Southern California
OCT. 5 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Charity Boutique
National Charity League Juniors
OCT. 12, 13 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Descanso Benefit Plant Sale
Descanso Garden Guild
NOV. 2, 3 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Chrysanthemum Show
Glendale Chrysanthemum Society
NOV. 9, 10 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Ikebana Show
Ikebana International, Los Angeles Chapter
All events sponsored by the Descanso Garden Guild

SOUTH COAST BOTANIC GARDEN, Palos Verdes Peninsula

SEPT. 8 — 2 p.m.
Flower Photography
Margret Norwood, Media Specialist
SEPT. 15 — 2 p.m.
Origami Demonstration
Beth Glogovcsan
SEPT. 22 — 2 p.m.
Growing Rare Fruit
Rare Fruit Society of Southern Calif.
SEPT. 29 — 2 p.m.
Insect Infestation Lecture
Lorin Gillogly
OCT. 13 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Quilt Show
Las Primeras of the Assistance League of San Pedro-Palos Verdes
OCT. 19, 20 — 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Art Show and Sale
Palos Verdes Community Arts Assoc.
OCT. 26, 27 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Bonsai Show
South Coast Bonsai Assoc.
OCT. 30 - NOV. 2 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Crafts Fair
CountryCrafts
All events sponsored by the So. Coast Botanic Garden Foundation